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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000446

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/E  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND HUDSON  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [EFIN](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [KPKO](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: UNMIS FEARS FOR THE STABILITY OF SOUTH SUDAN

REFS: A. KHARTOUM 375  
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 185  
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 330

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In a meeting on March 27 with ConGen Juba, Lise Grande, UNMIS Deputy Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, expressed the view that the recent tribal fighting in Pibor County in Jonglei State and the "Wounded Soldiers" protests over back pay that shut down major trade corridors to Uganda and Kenya in March signal a disturbing trend. Tracking with Embassy reporting over the past few months, she said this trend "could lead to dangerous and even catastrophic" levels of instability in Southern Sudan in the lead up to the 2011 referendum on independence. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In a March 27 meeting with CG Juba, Grande expressed UN concerns over three issues that she thought could critically undermine the stability of Southern Sudan: the budget crisis caused by the collapse in oil prices, civilian disarmament, and tensions within the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) that could create more Malakal-like conflicts across the South.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Of greatest concern to the UN, said Grande, is the recent fighting between the Murle and Nuer communities in Jonglei state (ref. A). Traditional conflict between these tribes runs deep and is long-standing, although the cause of the latest flare up seems to have involved incidents of cattle rustling (the smaller Murle tribe supported Khartoum during the Sudanese Civil War while many Nuer were part of the SPLM and prior rebel movements). The UN estimates that 450 people were killed, although there are reports the death toll exceeded 700. Even at 450, this makes this conflict more deadly than the combined casualties resulting from SPLM-SAF fighting in Malakal in February, 2008 and in Abyei in May, 2008.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The GOSS understands that the best way to reduce the killing is through civilian disarmament, said Grande. The problem, according to GOSS Interior Minister Paul Mayom's assessment that he shared with Grande, is that the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) is simply not up to the job. There are not enough policemen, and they lack the training required to successfully carry out such a mission. On the other hand, Grande said that SPLA Chief of Staff Oyay Deng Ajak told her the SPLA does not want to conduct the disarmament either. The last time they tried to do so in this region the SPLA reportedly lost 200 soldiers killed. The GOSS insisted that the level of force needed to effectively disarm the state would only alienate the local population to such a degree that the SPLA would come to be seen as an enemy, with serious consequences for the GOSS' ability to control the region.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Grande continued that the UN also is concerned that the GOSS still is not taking the looming financial crisis facing the South as seriously as it should. The GOSS' almost complete dependence on oil revenues to fund its operations, combined with the recent plunge in oil prices, means that the GOSS budget will fall

far short of what is needed in 2009 (refs. B and C). Salva Kiir has for four years used oil revenues to secure a certain level of social peace and stability in South Sudan and that option is now ending. Salary arrears are building, which already has resulted in two very troubling protests by the "Wounded Heroes" elements in the SPLA. These protests completely closed two critically-important trade corridors, one to Uganda and the other to Kenya.

¶16. (SBU) The first occurred near the Uganda border when the "Wounded Heroes" recently erected road blocks that halted all trade between South Sudan and Uganda. The soldiers had not been paid since November, and the blockage created such a severe problem that GOSS President Salva Kiir himself went to the town of Yei to negotiate an end to the action. In order to placate them, Kiir arranged for the protesters to receive two months of back pay, promising that the rest would be made up soon.

¶17. (SBU) Observing the success of this action, a second group of "Wounded Heroes" held a similar protest in the town of Kapoeta, near the Kenyan border, once again shutting down a critical trade corridor into Southern Sudan and trapping a number of foreigners in the town. This once again required a high-level delegation from the GOSS, including the Minister for SPLA Affairs, to travel to Kapoeta to negotiate with the protestors. The Wounded Heroes this time refused the offer of two months pay as inadequate, and it took two days for the GOSS delegation to finally satisfy the demands of the protesters, keeping the SPLA Minister away from an important conference on implementing an SPLA strategy plan.

¶18. (SBU) Finally, Grande stated her concern that the chronic and continuing political and economic problems will work to increase internal tensions in JIUs across the border areas and in the South.

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She said the UN believes the environment is ripe for a repeat in other places in the South of the recent SAF versus SPLM JIU clashes in Malakal, citing Torit as an especially troubling case where fighting could break out.

¶19. (SBU) Comment: We agree with Grande's assessment that the stability of the South is coming under increasing strain due to crippling budget shortfalls and the continuing deterioration of the security scene based on tribal and political dynamics. The cash that bought a certain level of social peace is almost gone. The protests in Yei and Kapoeta have taught a dangerous (for the GOSS) lesson to unpaid state workers: create a big enough stink and the GOSS will act to somehow get you your money. The GOSS has been fortunate that there have so far been no deaths or serious injuries in these actions, but such casualties are only a matter of time. The bulk of the GOSS budget goes to salary payments (including to the 150,000 man SPLA), which has helped to buy short-term social peace in an impoverished, war-ravaged, ethnically-divided, and heavily-armed region. However, the GOSS' ability to distribute such largesse is drying up due to the drop in oil revenues. Given the fiscal mess the GOSS finds itself in, coupled with continuing NCP machinations to promote discord in the South, the threat to South Sudan's continued stability is real and growing. To avoid this, the GOSS must find a realistic way to meet its fiscal obligations and develop a strategic plan to disarm a dangerously well armed and increasingly unhappy civilian population.

FERNANDEZ